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RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 2667  
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/26/2017  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [BL](#)  
SUBJECT: SUCRE HOLDS RALLY FOR RETURN TO FULL CAPITAL STATUS  
  
REF: LA PAZ 2020

Classified By: Ecopol Counselor Andrew Erickson  
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

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Summary  
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¶1. (SBU) On July 25, over 100,000 (perhaps over 200,000) people rallied in Sucre calling for the executive and legislative branches to return to Bolivia's historical (and still constitutional) capital. This rally followed La Paz's demonstration on July 20 where over a million "pacenos" gathered together demanding that both branches stay in La Paz (reftel). The rally's only official speaker, Jaime Barron, rector of Sucre's University San Francisco Xavier, made impassioned pleas for the return of the branches of government and also took a few indirect rhetorical swipes at the majority Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) and President Evo Morales. Despite the GOB's position that moving the capital should not be discussed, many local MAS deputies, senators, and Constituent Assembly (CA) members attended the rally. President Morales' argument that the CA has no legal authority to contemplate moving the capital is ironic given that he and his MAS colleagues have long argued that the CA is a plenipotentiary (all powerful) body. Supporters for both La Paz and Sucre have vowed to keep up their pressure on the CA, meaning the issue will not go away anytime soon. End Summary.

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The Rhetoric  
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¶2. (U) Jaime Barron, rector of Sucre's University San Francisco Xavier and the president of the "Inter-Institutional Committee for the Full Capital", was the only official speaker at the rally. Organizers requested that no politicians speak to the crowds to "avoid politicizing" the rally. Barron's and the rally's organizers specific demands included that the Constituent Assembly (CA) debate returning the powers to Sucre or that a national referendum be called on the issue. President Morales, members of his government and MAS officials in general, have all stated that the "capital" issue should not be debated within the CA, and that

the CA has no legal authority to do so.

¶3. (U) Barron pitched returning the branches of government to Sucre as "restoring to Bolivia its dignity and national integrity." Recognizing that Sucre's rally was much smaller than that of La Paz, the rector stated, "We are 200,000, much less than in La Paz, but here we are talking about quality, not quantity." Using the MAS' own tagline of "change" and openly criticizing the GOB's position on Sucre, Barron stated "No one benefits from exclusionary centralism that impedes the state from being in all the departments, municipalities and communities, . . . the time for change is upon us." At the end of his speech Barron led the crowd in an oath to "defend and respect the principals of liberty, justice and

equality; defend democracy, the unity of the nation, and the full capital status for the city of Sucre."

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The Attendance  
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¶4. (SBU) Emboff spoke with PODEMOS alternate Senator and former Minister of Indigenous Affairs Tomasa Yarwi shortly after the rally ended. Yarwi stated that almost the entire Chuquisaca department's (where Sucre is located) congressional delegation, including MAS deputies and senators, attended the rally. Yarwi also mentioned that Prefect David Sanchez (later confirmed by news reports), also of the MAS, attend the demonstration. Yarwi estimated the crowd at over 200,000. Local businessman and Spanish Honorary Consul Luis Pedro Rodriguez Colon concurred with Yarwi's estimate. Sucre delegate to the Constituent Assembly Jaime Hurtado Poveda told Emboff that he estimated the crowd at over 100,000 and confirmed that many in the MAS were in attendance. (Note: Greater Sucre has approximately 300,000 inhabitants, so the crowd represented 30 to 60 percent of the total population depending on which estimate used. End Note). Each mentioned that people from all over rural Chuquisaca department had converged on the city. They also reported that people from as far as Potosi and the eastern departments of Beni, Pando, Santa Cruz, and Tarija attended the rally. (Comment: In an apparent attempt to downplay the event, the government-sponsored news service ABI reported that Santa Cruz Prefect Ruben Costas was paying people 100 bolivianos to attend the rally. End Comment).

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Comment: A Sucre Spoiler?  
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¶5. (C) Opposition contacts have repeatedly told us privately that they see the Sucre versus La Paz controversy as a spoiler with the potential to derail the entire CA. With President Morales drawing support in the 90 percent range from El Alto and the Altiplano Aymara heartland, he can paralyze the capital with demonstrations at will. Indeed, the strategically vulnerable location of La Paz has long been a bane of previous GOBs. The rest of the country knows this, and many who favor changing the capital see it as a strategic move capable of breaking Evo Morales' chokehold on power.

¶6. (SBU) President Morales, argument that the CA has no legal authority to contemplate moving the capital is ironic given that he and his MAS colleagues have long argued that the CA is a plenipotentiary (all powerful) body. Despite calls to remove the issue from the CA's agenda, Bolivia's capital remains a topic in seven of the CA's twenty-one commissions. Supporters for both La Paz and Sucre have vowed to keep up their pressure on the CA, meaning the issue will not go away anytime soon. End Comment.  
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